

BIG IDEAS RALEIGH



Strategic Plan

OVERVIEW REPORT FY26-29



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Raleigh

Together, We Make Big Ideas Happen

Building Raleigh's FY26–29 Strategic Plan has been a thoughtful, collaborative effort. We started by reflecting on the successes and lessons learned from the FY21–25 plan, gathering feedback from staff, leadership, and external experts. We then listened closely to residents and employees to better understand community priorities and everyday experiences.

The Strategic Plan is our playground to innovate, experiment, and bring new ideas to the City of Raleigh. Thank you for joining us as we lay the pathway for continued progress in the years ahead.



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Community Safety

Strategic Objective

1. Advance a holistic approach to community safety to foster security, trust, and a sense of connection among residents.

Our Focus

Community safety is multi-faceted. Strategies must be data-driven and address crime as well as public perception of safety, with an emphasis on community trust-building and visible safety improvements. Community safety can be strengthened by providing more opportunities to connect with neighbors throughout the city and outside the downtown core. The City aims to explore place-based strategies, focusing on the needs and opportunities of a specific location to drive individualized safety interventions. This approach includes a balance of law enforcement, alternative response models, improvements to infrastructure, and community building to help people feel safe and welcomed. Successful pilots can be scaled to other areas of the city.

What Success Looks Like

- Improved resident ratings on openness and acceptance of diverse community members
- Improved ratings of safety in Raleigh overall
- Reduced crime for both people and property

What We Are Doing

Make Public Spaces Safer and More Sociable

We're working to make Downtown Raleigh, parks, and greenways feel safer and more inviting by investing in the conditions that support connection, safety, and community.

Bringing Neighbors Together

We're supporting more neighborhood events to help people connect.

Celebrating Raleigh's Diverse Communities

We're making sure City programs and events reflect the many cultures, identities, and backgrounds that make Raleigh vibrant and strong.

Partnering With the Community on Safety and Healing

We're training City staff and partnering with others to use trauma-informed and culturally respectful approaches that build trust and support healing.

Designing Safer Streets and Spaces

We're improving lighting, visibility, and layout in public places to help prevent crime and make spaces feel more welcoming.

Sending the Right Help When You Call 911

We're sending crisis teams or unarmed responders for certain 911 calls, so residents get the right kind of help when they need it.

Building Trust Through Positive Police Engagement

We're hosting community-police events to build relationships and strengthen trust, especially with youth and families.



Economic Development & Innovation

Strategic Objective

1. Streamline and modernize business support processes to improve efficiency, fairness, and accessibility for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Our Focus

The City commits to making business interactions smoother and reducing administrative delays. This includes strengthening cross-departmental coordination and internal tools to improve the clarity, efficiency, and predictability of business-related processes. This also involves engaging with key partners to provide broader support for local businesses.

What Success Looks Like

- Improved business owner satisfaction with assistance navigating City government resources
- Improved resident satisfaction with ease of doing business with the city
- Increased utilization rate for underutilized businesses in City construction and repair contracts

What We Are Doing

Faster Contracting and Payments

We're speeding up how quickly we process contracts and pay vendors, so businesses get paid on time and can focus on growing.

Clear, Consistent Processes Across City Departments

We're making sure business services follow clear steps across all City departments, so it's easier to know what to expect and who to talk to.

Streamlined Business Support Services

We're streamlining how businesses find support, get permits, and connect to resources without needing to contact multiple entities.

Reaching More Small and Underutilized Businesses

We're expanding our support to help more businesses, especially small and underutilized ones, get the help they need to launch, grow, and thrive.

Stronger Connections with Community Partners

We're working more closely with local organizations to make sure businesses can get connected to the right support at the right time.

Strategic Objective

2. Enhance Raleigh's local arts and culture ecosystem to drive both resident engagement and economic growth.

Our Focus

Raleigh's arts and cultural assets not only benefit the local community but also are important contributors to economic vitality. Currently, limited awareness of cultural offerings prevents residents from fully engaging with Raleigh's creative landscape, and artists struggle to connect with audiences. The City aims to increase visibility and accessibility for local arts and cultural programs, ensuring that cultural recognition and promotion serves both residents and visitors. This means strengthening local artist support, integrating arts into broader economic development strategies, and ensuring Raleigh's history and culture are woven into the City's identity and evolving fabric.

What Success Looks Like

- Improved resident ratings on availability of arts and cultural programs in Raleigh
- Increased annual economic impact of arts and culture (**data gap)
- More new jobs in Raleigh's creative sector
- Increased arts and cultural nonprofit event attendance and budget size (*operational)

What We Are Doing

Showcase Local Art and Culture Across the City

We're supporting more public art and cultural events that showcase Raleigh's local talent and assets, bringing arts and culture into more neighborhoods and public spaces across the city.

Activate Major Venues as Hubs for Arts and Culture

We're working to host more arts and cultural events and welcome bigger audiences at the Raleigh Convention Center, Performing Arts Center, and Red Hat Amphitheater.

Increase City Support for Creative Sector Businesses

Increase the share of the City's business support services focused on creative sector businesses, helping artists, performers, and cultural entrepreneurs grow and sustain their businesses.



Environmental Resilience

Strategic Objective

Expand community and climate resilience programs, with a focus on protecting communities at highest risk from environmental hazards.

Our Focus

The City recognizes the need for systemic solutions that integrate policy decisions, service delivery, and community engagement to enhance climate resilience. Expanding education and incentives around sustainable consumption and waste reduction can also support both businesses and residents in making more environmentally responsible choices. By taking a holistic approach, the City can empower the local community to take action and direct targeted resources to communities most at risk of extreme heat, flooding, and environmental hazards while fostering a culture of shared environmental responsibility.

What Success Looks Like

- Greater share of residents engaged in climate action and sustainability initiatives
- Reduce the cost per pound of nitrogen removed or per gallon of stormwater diverted
- Reduced heat risk for high priority geographic areas
- Improved waste diversion rates

What We Are Doing

Help More Residents Access Climate Resilience Programs

We're expanding programs through climate resilience hubs and private-public partnerships to give residents tools, resources, and information to enhance our urban ecosystems and better prepare for extreme weather, flooding, and other climate risks.

Keep Neighborhoods Safer from Flooding

We're investing in stormwater projects that help prevent flooding by moving water away from homes, streets, and businesses, especially in the areas most at risk.

Implement Smarter Green Stormwater Infrastructure

We're making sure every dollar we invest in stormwater projects and green infrastructure delivers strong results, like cleaner water and reduced flood risk.

Support Residents Living in Flood-Prone Areas

We're providing information and resources to residents in flood-prone areas so they have what they need to stay safe and recover quickly.

Cool the City's Hottest Areas

We're planting more trees, building shade structures, and using cool pavement in neighborhoods hit hardest by extreme heat to keep streets and communities cooler.

Increase Recycling Where It's Needed Most

We're focusing education and outreach in areas across the city, so more residents know what goes in the bin and why it matters.

Test and Grow Composting Programs

We're piloting composting efforts and tracking what works so we can offer more sustainable options citywide in the future.



Housing

Strategic Objectives

1. Advance proven solutions to mitigate housing insecurity.
2. Promote walkable, mixed-income communities that expand housing choices and integrate with transit and infrastructure.

Our Focus

Housing affordability is both a supply and access problem. This means we must increase housing supply while also lowering barriers to accessing and maintaining housing for people at greatest risk of housing insecurity by providing rental assistance, emergency assistance, and access to follow-along supports and services. There is also a need to address issues such as building upkeep and energy affordability for residential developments, especially affordable housing communities. All residents should have a place to live that provides safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. The City aims to use transparent data, streamlined regulatory processes, and evidence-based, early intervention programs and policies to assist cost-burdened residents.

What Success Looks Like

- Increased housing production across unit types
- Greater share of new units built near frequent transit routes
- Sustained housing stability and service connections for housing program participants
- Improved resident ratings of variety of housing options
- Improved resident ratings of availability of affordable housing

What We Are Doing

Provide Financial Assistance to Keep People in Their Homes

We're providing rental and housing assistance programs to help residents facing housing insecurity stay in their homes.

Prevent Homelessness Before It Happens

We're strengthening programs that help residents avoid homelessness by providing prevention and diversion services before they lose housing.

Speed Up Housing Development Reviews

We're streamlining the City's review process so it takes less time to approve new housing.

Support More Housing Options Through Zoning Changes

We're updating zoning rules to support a wider mix of housing options, including more missing middle homes and homes near frequent transit, and making sure these homes get built.

Preserve Affordable Housing That Already Exists

We're identifying and protecting naturally occurring affordable housing, such as older homes and apartments that are still affordable without subsidies, so residents can stay in their communities.



Organizational Excellence

Strategic Objective

1. Create a seamless service experience that ensures all residents can easily access city services.
2. Deliver consistent, responsive, and equitable city services with clear standards and proactive communication

Our Focus

The City aims to work towards a clear, centralized system for residents to access city services and staff support. The focus is on making it easy for residents to share their concerns and have them resolved, regardless of the channel of communication. This involves setting clear service standards to ensure consistency, transparency, and reliability of service, as well as proactive communication regarding critical service information.

What Success Looks Like

- Improved resident ratings of ease of making a service request
- Improved resident ratings of quality of services provided by the City
- Improved resident ratings of ease of locating information on the City's website
- Improved resident ratings of effectiveness of City communication with the public

What We Are Doing

More Services Available Online

We're expanding self-service options, like online forms, applications, and payments, so residents can take care of tasks quickly, anytime.

Resolve Issues the First Time

We're improving how we handle service complaints so that residents get their issues resolved on the first try, with fewer callbacks and less follow-up needed.

Faster, Clearer Responses to Service Requests

We're setting clear standards, so you know what to expect, whether you're requesting a repair, permit, or support from City staff.

Letting Resident Feedback Shape Services

We're using community input to guide decisions so major projects and service changes reflect what residents actually need.

Closing the Loop on Feedback

We're working on ways to show residents how their feedback led to action, or why we couldn't make a change, so you're never left wondering.

Strategic Objective

3. Strengthen workforce capacity through competitive pay and better workplace policies

Our Focus

High quality service delivery is dependent on recruiting and retaining top talent. Staff shortages lead to longer wait times, reduced efficiency, and significant costs associated with turnover. One area of focus is ensuring competitive total rewards structures across employee groups. There is also an opportunity to enhance other workplace policies, programs, and benefits that can improve staff satisfaction and retention.

What Success Looks Like

- Improved employee satisfaction for key staff programs
- Reduced staff turnover and vacancy rates

What We Are Doing

Up-to-Date Policies That Work for Staff

We're reviewing and improving internal policies so employees have the clarity and support they need to do their jobs well.

Listening and Responding to Staff Feedback

We're acting on what we hear from employees, making changes where possible and explaining decisions clearly when change isn't feasible.

More Learning and Growth Opportunities

We're increasing access to professional development so employees can keep growing their skills and careers at the City.

Competitive Pay That Reflects the Market

We're updating job classifications and pay to ensure our compensation stays competitive and fair.

Better Benefits for a Better Workplace

We're adding enhanced employee benefits that support work-life balance and help make the City a great place to work.



Quality of Life

Strategic Objective

1. Ensure and expand access to Raleigh's arts, parks, cultural, and recreational assets

Our Focus

The City recognizes that arts, culture, and recreation play a critical role in fostering community connections, social cohesion, and enhancing quality of life. However, barriers such as affordability, geographic access, and awareness of programs limit participation by residents. The City aims to expand programs beyond downtown to better serve all neighborhoods, ensuring that offerings are both accessible and relevant to local communities. Special emphasis will be placed on engaging youth and leveraging Raleigh's assets to create vibrant, prosperous, inclusive, and connected communities.

What Success Looks Like

- Increased share of residents who have participated in arts or cultural education program
- Increased participation in arts, cultural, and recreation programs in the last year, disaggregated by various community populations
- Improved resident ratings on cost of arts and cultural programs
- Increased share of residents who have visited a park

What We Are Doing

More Programs in More Neighborhoods

We're bringing more arts, cultural, and recreation programs to neighborhoods across Raleigh, especially in areas outside downtown.

Programs That Reflect Our Community

We're offering more programs designed for youth, active adults, and other community groups to meet the needs of everyone in our community.

Expand Marketing and Promotion of the City's Arts, Cultural, and Recreation Events

Strengthen and coordinate the City's marketing and outreach efforts to better promote arts, cultural, and recreation events, using targeted strategies to reach more residents and visitors and drive higher attendance.

Affordable and Free Options for All

We're intentionally providing free and low-cost programs to make sure price isn't a barrier for anyone who wants to enjoy Raleigh's arts, culture, and recreation.

Parks and Gathering Spaces Within Reach

We're working to make sure more residents live within a short walk or drive of parks and public spaces where they can relax, play, and connect with neighbors.



Transportation

Strategic Objective

1. Enhance mobility and accessibility by improving transit frequency, pedestrian safety, and seamless connections between transportation options.

Our Focus

All residents, regardless of their primary mode of transportation, are pedestrians at some point in their transportation journey. However, some residents rely on walking and public transit to a greater degree, making pedestrian safety a key public safety and equity issue as well. There is an opportunity to make programmatic and infrastructure enhancements to improve the overall transit rider experience and increase public trust in the transit system. By making transit easy to use, comfortable, and more frequent, core riders can become advocates to encourage broader adoption. These efforts can be enhanced further through aligned zoning and land use policies.

What Success Looks Like

- Reduced pedestrian and cyclist injuries and fatalities
- Improved residents rating for availability of diverse options for alternative forms of transportation
- Increased share of residents indicating that they have used GoRaleigh in the last 12 months
- Increased GoRaleigh ridership

What We Are Doing

Better Connections to Transit

We're closing gaps in sidewalks and bike routes that make it hard to reach priority transit routes.

More Sidewalks Where They're Needed Most

We're speeding up sidewalk projects to connect neighborhoods to schools, jobs, parks, and services.

A Better Bus Experience for Riders

We're making GoRaleigh buses more efficient and ensuring a great experience for riders.

Improve How Residents Experience Transit, Walking, and Biking

We're listening to residents and working to improve how they feel about walking, biking, and riding the bus to make comfort, safety, and ease a priority.

More Frequent and Reliable Bus Service

We're improving on-time performance to priority transit routes to make GoRaleigh buses more frequent, and convenient for everyday trips.

Improve Bus Service to Meet Demand

We're tracking how efficiently the system runs to make sure we're delivering high-quality service that's cost-effective and meets growing demand.

